



DCH Team,

With 2020 now behind us, I know that I am personally looking forward to 2021 with great expectation and hope for what lies ahead.

To that end, in this edition of *DCHNOW!*, we have taken a look across the DCH enterprise to highlight some of the priority initiatives for our divisions and offices during calendar year 2021. Yes, a great deal of our work will still relate to efforts surrounding COVID-19, but I think sometimes lost in that is all the hard work centered around the longer-term efforts of the agency – efforts that will stretch beyond the pandemic – in providing Georgians with access to quality, affordable health care. Our divisions and offices have [critical work](#) to tend to in the year to come, and I look forward to working with each of you in accomplishing those goals and initiatives.

As part of our commitment to best support you in 2021 and beyond, we want you to be aware and to take advantage of the many benefits afforded to you and your families as state government employees. In addition to financial well-being, we are keenly focused on your emotional well-being, especially during these challenging times. Please take a moment to read through the article on the [benefits available to you](#) and don't hesitate to reach out to your supervisor or the Office of Human Relations should you have any questions.

Also in this edition of *DCHNOW!*, we are very pleased to shine the spotlight on a couple of well-deserving teams. First, please read about [our Healthcare Facility Regulation Division](#) (HFRD) being awarded a 2020 Army Community Partnership Award during a virtual award ceremony held on January 13, 2021. Congratulations to Melanie Simon, Executive Director of HFRD, and her entire team on this recognition for the critical work HFRD has performed to serve residents and staff in Georgia's long-term care facilities over the course of the public health emergency. This award is a very big deal and we could not be prouder of the entire HFRD team!

Additionally, please check out our [Team Spotlight on the Commissioner's Office Administrative Support team](#), led by Danisha Williams. On a personal note, I can't thank the team enough for all you do in support of the agency and I know I speak for many others in that regard.

Finally, as we continue to navigate COVID-19, I want to reaffirm our guidance that unless you are required to be in the office for on-site business activities, you should work remotely to help mitigate the spread of the virus.

Thank you for all you do for DCH and those we serve. I hope you and your families continue to stay safe and healthy.

Frank



2021 Office/Division Initiatives

The first month of the new year is almost complete, and 2021 is already proving to be a task-filled year. Although we are still in the throes of COVID-19, the work of the agency continues outside of the public health emergency. Here are some of the initiatives your respective offices/divisions and colleagues will be focusing on in 2021:

- **Continuous Program Improvement (CPI)**

- Provider Data Quality – The CPI office will work with DCH subject matter experts and representatives from our vendor partners and external provider community to unpack the provider enrollment process for the purpose of collecting consistent provider data. This initiative will work alongside the implementation of our new provider module. Improved data quality will have a positive impact on communication efforts between DCH and our provider community, as well as enhance provider related reporting and analytics.
- Social Determinants and Healthcare Access – The CPI office will work with DCH subject matter experts and representatives from our vendor partners and external provider community to increase awareness of social determinants of health for the purpose of improving access to healthcare. Social determinants of health are conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play that affect a wide range of health and quality-of-life risks and outcomes.

The CPI office will facilitate discussions to create collaborative outreach efforts within Georgia communities. This initiative will identify the mechanisms to collect social determinants of health data as well as probe into current Medicaid services to ensure members are accessing all services made available to them through the program.

- **Healthcare Facility Regulation Division (HFRD)**

- COVID-19 Response – The top priority for the HFRD in 2021 is to continue to support the State's response to the COVID-19 public health emergency by conducting inspections of over 20 types of healthcare facilities to ensure the delivery of safe, quality healthcare services throughout Georgia. Facility inspections will focus on infection control measures as well as other regulatory requirements. The Division will prioritize the oversight of long-term care facilities and other settings with vulnerable populations and will continue to collaborate with sister agencies on data sharing, policy and regulatory guidance, and other matters impacting the pandemic response.

- Memory Care Rules – HFRD will develop and implement rule changes for memory care certification to comply with the Disabled Adults and Elder Persons Protection Act of 2020. These rule changes will impact assisted living communities and personal care homes of 25 beds or more to safeguard residents and increase requirements for staffing, training, financial stability and memory care.
- **Medical Assistance Plans**
 - Georgia Pathways to Coverage 1115 Demonstration Waiver – Workgroups are already hard at work executing against project timelines towards the implementation date of July 1, 2021. Georgia Pathways to Coverage allows working-age Georgia adults who are ineligible for Medicaid to opt into Medicaid coverage by participating in qualifying activities such as work, higher education or community service, as well as meeting premium and income requirements.
 - Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) Implementation –Implementation of project activities continues to get EVV up and running with minimal impact to services delivered to constituents. The primary goal is to ensure enhanced Home Care Services accountability.
- **Office of Communications**
 - Expanded Internal Communications Efforts – With the current remote working atmosphere, new tools will be used to enhance communications with DCH team members. This will include the launch of a Communications dashboard that will include daily updates regarding pertinent agency information and news as well as ramped up efforts to communicate timely information to each of you relating to DCH strategies and initiatives through a variety of other channels. Stay tuned for more details.
 - Media Relations – Given the heightened focus on Georgia’s health care agencies, Media Relations will continue to promote DCH’s outstanding efforts and performance related to COVID-19 activities and agency priorities through reactive and proactive engagement with both local and national media outlets.
- **Office of Financial Management**
 - Cost Allocation – The team is developing a new and more efficient cost allocation process. The new process will allow the agency to capture activities that are applicable to the funding streams that are in place to support them.
 - Banking – The team is creating a banking process suited to meet the needs of the agency in terms of the flow of cash. This relates to the cash transactions the Department processes week-to-week.
- **Office of Government Relations (OGR)**
 - Implementation of the Engagifii platform – The OGR has transitioned to a new bill tracking platform called Engagifii. This platform is an upgrade from the previous program, Capitol Impact. Familiarizing users with the new features should assist the

Government Relations team with tracking the status of relevant bills and ensuring up-to-date bill analyses from subject matter experts.

- Constituent Services Access – OGR has worked with various divisions across DCH to identify challenges that are frequently experienced by citizens. The constituent services team has compiled a list of frequently asked questions and posted them to the DCH website to help individuals find answers to questions quickly. The team will continue to share this document with external partners in an effort to help Georgians easily navigate our various programs.
- **Office of Healthcare Analytics and Reporting (OHAR)**
 - Expanding data analytics and visualization capabilities – The OHAR/Decision Support Services is working diligently to develop a state-of-the art environment in the Amazon Cloud to maximize the data access opportunities created by the Medicaid Enterprise System Transformation (MEST) modularity project. Future results include streamlined and standardized access to data and analyses to facilitate programmatic efforts with better information. Process improvement efforts continue to expand access to DCH data and to support program efforts.
 - Data Governance – This is a core component to conducting analyses to facilitate effective decision making for ongoing management of data quality and the enforcement of data standards. In working with Office of Information Technology (OIT) and CPI, OHAR is committed to initiating and sustaining Enterprise Data Governance within the agency. Results include improved data quality, efficiencies with analytics and better management of vendor responsibilities with DCH data requirements.
- **Office of Health Planning (OHP)**
 - Electronic plan submission – The architecture industry has been long reliant on paper blueprints to convey design and construction concepts. This created a challenge and an opportunity, when the pandemic forced the OHP's Plans Review Unit to work remotely. The challenge was how to receive submissions for plan review without relying on receiving volumes of rolls of paper blueprint drawings. The opportunity or solution: implementing use of Bluebeam Studio. This software will allow Health Planning to accept drawings electronically through secure FTP sites, place comments directly on drawings and share those comments with the designers, in real time if needed, for faster reviews and greater communication. OHP has acquired the Bluebeam software and larger monitors and will gradually transition to a completely electronic plan submission process during 2021.
 - Electronic payments – While the OHP has established a wholly online application submission process, that process is bifurcated because application payments and other fees and fines are still required to be made using money orders and cashier's checks. This delays the review process as payments have to be received via mail, matched to the appropriate matter, and processed in order for the review process to commence. During 2021, OHP will explore establishing an online payment option thereby creating a seamless, cohesive electronic environment for providers.

- **Office of Human Resources**

- Interview and Selection Process – The roll-out of the new interview and selection process for all hiring managers and supervisors will occur in 2021. This process will establish uniform guidelines, documents and procedures for all offices and divisions.
- Workforce planning – Strategic focus planning will help our agency identify and address the staffing, diversity and competency gaps between our workforce of today and the workforce needs of tomorrow.

- **Office of Information Technology (OIT)**

- Outlook/Teams Organization – DCH IT completed a project which included populating the DCH organizational structure for each DCH team member in Microsoft Office365. This allows a user to see where a team member fits into the broader organization by simply clicking the Organization tab on the Contact Card in Outlook or when viewing users in Teams. This information will be kept updated using the existing on and off boarding process.
- Electronic Visit Verification (EVV) Module – The Medicaid Enterprise System Transformation (MEST) project involves the transformation of the Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) components into modules connected across an Integration Platform. Beginning in January 2021, the Integration Platform will be used to transmit data files for the new EVV solution program. The Integration Platform has successfully transmitted files between Gainwell (for MMIS) and Conduent/Tellus (for EVV). Successful connectivity across the MEST Integration Platform will allow the EVV solution to be easily integrated as a module and is a critical milestone in ensuring that the EVV solution will be ready for production “go live.” It also sets the stage for future modules which will include Provider Services, Claims/Financial Management and Third-Party Liability.

- **Office of Inspector General (OIG)**

- Advancing Fraud Detection I – The Program Integrity Unit (PI) will engage Fraud Scope, an artificial intelligence solution, to detect existing and emerging fraud schemes in the Georgia Medicaid and PeachCare for Kids programs.
- Advancing Fraud Detection II – PI will also engage Health Management Systems, Inc. to evaluate the Pharmacy Benefits Manager contract for potential overpayments.

- **Project Management Office (PMO)**

- Healthcare Workforce Logistics Invoicing – The PMO will provide continued support of agency priorities related to COVID-19 staffing augmentation services. This includes the reviewing of invoices for accuracy, as well as compiling said invoices for receipting and ultimately, payment.
- DCH Strategic Plan – PMO will be focused on providing the annual update to the Office of Planning and Budget regarding the agency’s progress against the fiscal year goals. The team has been tracking progress quarterly and will identify the

strategic initiatives that are on track as well as areas of concern that may need to be prioritized.

- **State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP)**

- Open Enrollment & Retiree Option Change Period – SHBP is focusing on steering members, especially retirees, to the new SHBP Enrollment Portal for the Open Enrollment & Retiree Option Change Period, which will put the member in control over their benefits and reduce our dependency on the call center. Multiple in-person and virtual classes on the new SHBP Enrollment Portal will be offered to help members become comfortable with taking control of their benefits and taking advantage of the tools available to assist them.
- Unwinding Anxiety Program – SHBP is launching this new benefit that is now available at no additional cost to members enrolled in Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield or UnitedHealthcare, non-Medicare Advantage Plan Options. The program can be accessed through Sharecare's online platform for the *Be Well SHBP*® well-being program. This evidence-based program helps members identify triggers, ride out stressful episodes, and completely change their relationship with stress. With emotional well-being becoming a top of mind issue throughout our country and the world during these challenging times, SHBP is very proud to be offering this much needed wellness program for members.

- **State Office of Rural Health (SORH)**

- Strategic Marketing Campaign – SORH will implement a solid marketing and communication campaign to better position SORH's reach and footprint. This includes developing monthly informative web videos of every SORH program section, monthly Townhall virtual meetings for grantees, weekly Rural Health News emails to SORH's member roster, quarterly continuation of SORH's newly developed newsletter, and collaboration with the Georgia Rural Economic Development team to improve community engagement efforts.
- Strategic Data Analysis – SORH is focused on the creation of better data analysis tools and processes that result in strategic implementation of measurable objective outcomes data through our grant management process. The goal is to create deliverables that can measure patient impact and indicate successful project outcomes.



DCH HFRD and the Georgia Army National Guard Honored with a 2020 Army Community Partnership Award

DCH's Healthcare Facility Regulation Division (HFRD), in partnership with the Georgia Army National Guard, received a prestigious [2020 Army Community Partnership Award](#) during the Army's virtual award ceremony January 13, 2021. Congratulations to Melanie Simon, Executive Director of HFRD, and her entire team on this recognition for the critical work HFRD has performed over the course of the COVID-19 public health emergency, in this case helping to protect Georgia's long-term care facility residents through a data dashboard.

The award, presented by The Department of the Army, recognizes exceptional partnerships that encourage continued collaboration to improve readiness, drive modernization and enhance quality of life initiatives throughout the Army.

"Now more than ever, both public and private partnerships enhance our ability to [solve problems], as we look toward the future," said Alex A. Beehler, the assistant secretary of the Army for installations, energy and environment.

In early April 2020, DCH and the Georgia Army National Guard collaborated to develop the data-mining tool that identified long-term care facilities in need of immediate help during the COVID-19 pandemic. Once finalized, the tool accumulated data that included COVID-19 cases in licensed nursing homes, assisted living communities and personal care homes of 25 beds or more. This information was self-reported by the facilities, allowing the state to make informed decisions towards protecting some of Georgia's most vulnerable citizens.

"We realized very early on during the global pandemic that transparency would be key in our efforts to help mitigate the spread of the virus in long-term care facilities, particularly nursing homes, across the state," said Melanie Simon, executive director of the HFRD. "We would like to extend our gratitude to the Georgia Army National Guard for its assistance in creating an informative database for concerned staff, residents and their loved ones in these facilities."

DCH has posted the long-term care facility reports to its website each Monday-Friday as a public service to Georgia citizens since April 2020.

"This award is a true testament to the power of collaboration," said DCH Commissioner Frank Berry. "We are deeply honored to have worked with the Georgia Army National Guard, the Georgia Department of Public Health and the rest of our state partners during these challenging times. These partnerships have elevated our efforts in better serving our communities throughout the state of Georgia, and DCH will continue to do our part in helping Georgians fight this terrible virus."



Back in Session

The Georgia General Assembly convened at the State Capitol on January 11 for the first day of the 2021 legislative session.

Office of Government Relations Director Brandy Sylvan and Legislative Liaison Kaitlin Ward are picking up where we left off when the 2020 session adjourned in late June 2020, conducting virtually much of the critical work of representing DCH and the bills that could impact us.

“Our team is still working hard to represent DCH well, even during another unusual session,” said Brandy. “We hope things can get back to some sense of normalcy soon, though.”

The first order of business for DCH during the legislative session was to propose the agency’s fiscal year (FY) 2021 Amended and FY 2022 budgets to the General Assembly’s Appropriations Committees based on Governor Kemp’s recommendations. Commissioner Berry, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Lisa Walker, and Chief Health Policy Officer Blake Fulenwider presented DCH’s spending plans to the legislature and provided an overview of DCH’s tireless work over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kudos to Deputy CFO Kellee Richards and the entire Office of Financial Management – along with Lisa Walker – for their amazing work even as the pandemic and a myriad of other factors continue to throw the team curveballs. Their unwavering commitment to taking care of DCH employees during these challenging times while helping ensure the agency is able to perform critical work for those we serve is to be applauded.

DCH bill proposals and other legislation that could impact the Department

Prior to the start of the session, the Government Affairs office works with program areas throughout the agency to identify legislation that we would like to propose. There are three departmental proposals this year, and one of them has already been introduced.

House Bill (HB) 93, sponsored by Chair Sharon Cooper, is designed to do away with state licensure requirements for laboratories. All laboratories in the state are required to obtain a federal certification, and the state licensure requirements place duplicative regulations on providers with no significant safety or clinical value. If passed, DCH would maintain oversight over the laboratories on behalf of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

The Office of Government Relations is working on two additional departmental bills that have yet to be introduced. One would allow DCH to have final decision-making authority on appealed

decisions issued by the Office of State Administrative Hearings (OSAH). The second would clean up statutory language related to the prosecution of HIV transmission crimes.

Another key priority for the Government Affairs office during session is monitoring all newly introduced bills for their potential effect on DCH and our operations. We are already tracking the progress of several bills, including those that address mental health parity, regulation of medispas, and regulatory changes for drug abuse programs and surgical centers.

Stay tuned for updates and more details on each of these proposed bills and how they may impact DCH operations.



DCH SPOTLIGHT – Commissioner’s Office Administrative Support Team

No matter how long you’ve been with DCH, for newbies and more seasoned team members alike, a ride on the 2 Peachtree Street elevators to the 40th floor may mean that you might be headed to the Office of the Commissioner.

And while the 40th floor office is comprised of members of the DCH Executive Leadership Team (ELT), you’ll also find another group of very important colleagues: the Commissioner’s Office Administrative Support Team, led by Danisha Williams, and consisting of Brenda Taylor, Debra Joiner and Vivian Denson. Upon entering the glass facade etched with the blue DCH Synergy mark, you are immediately greeted by the smiling, vibrant faces of Debra and Vivian.

The Commissioner’s Office Administrative Support Team are strategists, critical thinkers, adapters and confidants; professional problem solvers who have, in many cases, already anticipated and handled the need before the need is spoken.

Danisha, a 16-year veteran with the State of Georgia, seven of which have been with DCH, currently serves as the Executive Confidential Assistant & Director of Board Affairs to Commissioner Berry and Chief of Staff Marial Ellis. During her career, she has honed her adroitness as a premier professional by working with extraordinary leaders who trust her insight and judgment. Danisha’s smarts, attention to detail, and can-do spirit help push forward so much of what gets done on the 40th floor.

“No matter how big or small the task, I give my best,” says Williams. “My best represents not only me and my work ethic, but is also ultimately a direct reflection of Commissioner Berry, the governor and the state of Georgia. I have to always be mindful of the bigger picture.”

While great teams are often comprised of individuals with distinctive mindsets who can bring different perspectives, it is also important to note that attracting and maintaining people who can respect the common goal is also just as important. They have to know how to thrive in an ever-changing environment, be fully committed to the process, exude professionalism at all times, and have a growth-centric mindset. And, while each of the individuals that make up the Commissioner’s Office Administrative Support Team have their individual personalities, they each exhibit the necessary traits needed to continuously elevate the standards of excellence expected of their team:

- Vivian Denson/ Administrative Assistant 2 – A 19-year employee for the State of Georgia, Vivian has been with DCH for four years. A noted “go-getter,” Vivian is a well-rounded professional who knows a little bit about everything in the office that she serves. She willingly steps up to challenges and is dependable and consistent in fulfilling her

role.

- Debra Joiner/ Administrative Assistant 1 – Has been with DCH for three years. A noted overachiever, she takes pride in the work that she does. With Debra, you can expect a skilled administrative assistant intent on producing quality work – and good conversation.
- Brenda Taylor/ Executive Administrative Assistant to Blake Fulenwider, Chief Health Policy Officer and Joseph Hood, Chief Compliance and Technology Officer – Is approaching her one-year anniversary with DCH. In that time, she has proven herself to be added reinforcement for Danisha when needed. She's pleasant to work with, and has a "can do, will do" spirit when assisting others.

For those of you who have received correspondence from Danisha in the past, you may notice the words "Executive Confidential Assistant" in her tagline. For Danisha and her team, integrity and discretion are two indispensable components crucial to both their individual and collective roles. Learning work styles, building a positive rapport, keeping one's ear to the ground and demonstrating the "know-how" of keeping privileged and sensitive information close to the chest can grow a level of trust that is steadfast and unbeatable. For Danisha, she credits much of her success to interactions with Commissioner Berry prior to him coming to DCH, along with her already astute executive-level skills, and knowing how to effectively achieve open, honest and respectful communication built on trust.

"Working with Commissioner Berry has been easy for me because he has always had an open-door policy where I can talk to him about anything. I've also learned how he works, which I think has grown his confidence in me," continued Williams. "That is the same level of trust that I hope I've built with my team as well."

As we embark on the new year, Danisha has a vision for her team that includes consistently leading with integrity. Her goal is to also further mentor and develop her direct reports, while also creating a professional, enjoyable work environment that will offer each of them the ability to reach their full potential.

"With the start of a new year, we look forward to embracing new opportunities to make a difference," said Williams. "We are all very professional individuals that truly take to heart the initiatives that are important to the Commissioner – inclusive of communication, customer service, teamwork and accountability. He has created an atmosphere that encourages DCH team members to thrive in and to love their jobs. Because of his care for us, it makes us really care about the work that we do to further support the department."

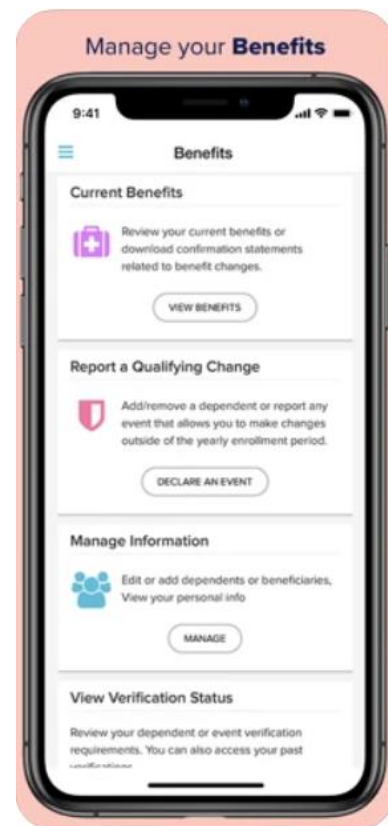
SHBP Launches New MyADP Eligibility & Enrollment Platform

On November 16, 2020, the Georgia Department of Community Health's State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP) Division launched the New SHBP Enrollment Portal on the MyADP platform. SHBP's vendor, ADP, administers MyADP.

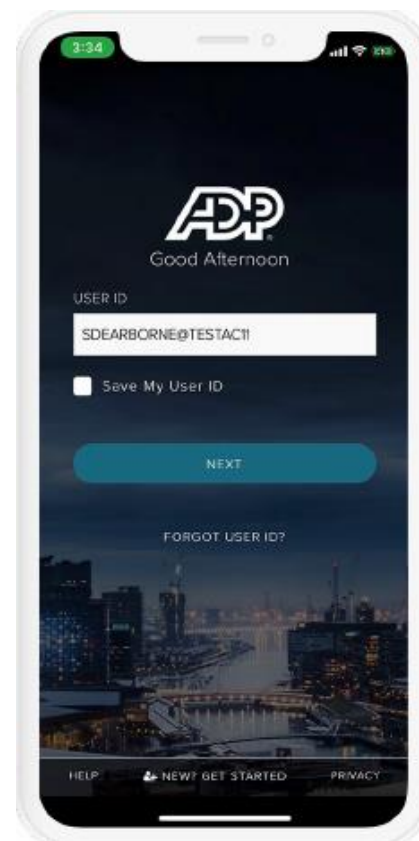
The New SHBP Enrollment Portal is the primary benefits tool for the approximately 600 Employing Entities and the 680,000 members we serve across Georgia. A few of the new features include:

- ADP Mobile app which allows SHBP Members to access their benefits right from their iPhone, Samsung, and other mobile devices and tablets
- Electronic submission of Dependent Verification and eligibility documentation via computer and mobile devices; and
- On demand Benefits Statements

The New SHBP Enrollment Portal is available at www.myshbpga.adp.com and members who require assistance with the portal may contact SHBP Member Services at 800-610-1863 or visit our website for more information at <https://shbp.georgia.gov>.



SHBP includes two Units: Clinical Quality & Outcomes and Eligibility & Benefits Administration. The EBA Unit, led by Deputy Executive Director Lekeisha E. Johnson, oversees DCH's relationship with ADP. A special thanks to Program Manager Kaleema Thomas, who was responsible for keeping the project on task and collaborating with our subject matter experts, and Member Services Manager Dianne Patterson and Employee Services Manager Rhonda Manning, both of whom worked tirelessly to ensure the new platform meets the needs of SHBP's members and employers. Lastly, SHBP would like to thank various team members including a project manager, two supervisors, SHBP's administrative specialist, and each of the team's member and employer services specialists. They all played a vital role in this transition of participating in continuous testing and providing feedback on improvements.





Learn More About A Few Employee Resources Available to You!

The new year is underway, and now is the perfect time to remind all DCH team members about the special benefits available to you as state employees. From purchasing big-ticket items credit-free to saving money for retirement and college, here is a quick look at a few benefits that might come in handy:

- **[Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\) and Work-Life Solutions](#)**

All state employees have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and Work-Life Solutions, which provides free and confidential counseling available 24/7, 365 days a year to help with common life issues.

Services are provided by licensed providers either face-to-face/virtual (when noted by the provider), through telephone counseling with Masters-level clinicians, or both. EAP also offers Work-Life services that focus on helping employees manage daily responsibilities such as childcare, eldercare, home repairs, moving, pet care and more.

Should an employee need legal or financial support services, EAP also offers no-cost, no-obligation consultation sessions with qualified professionals, and even discounts on attorney fees should an employee need one.

Learn more about the EAP by visiting EAPHelpLink.com (Company Code: Georgia). Once accessed, you'll discover a one-stop resource that can assist in better managing day-to-day challenges or any other life issues when and where you need it.

- **[ERSGA Pension](#)**

One of the outstanding benefits available to DCH employees is the Georgia State Employees' Pension and Savings Plan (GSEPS), a retirement plan that includes a 401K Plan with matching employer contribution and a Defined Benefit Pension Plan (DBPP). Both plans are managed by the Employees' Retirement System of Georgia (ERS).

The DBPP component of the GSEPS is mandatory for eligible employees (full-time and part-time employees who work at least 35 hours a week) and guarantees a monthly income in retirement, whereas a 401K does not make the same guarantee.

Pension benefits are increased as an employee continues serving as a state employee (number of service years are part of the benefits calculation). Employees can even use leave balances towards retirement if forfeited annual, forfeited sick and accumulated sick leave all add up to 960 hours (or 120 days).

Take a look at [ERS Benefits-At-A-Glance](#) which offers topline information regarding the benefit.

- **Peach State Reserves (PSR) 401K/457 Retirement Plans**

The second piece of the GSEPS retirement plan is a 401K/457 Plan. Upon hire, all full-time DCH employees are automatically enrolled in a 401K savings plan with an adjustable 5 percent contribution per paycheck deduction and up to a maximum 3 percent employer matching. Employees can make contributions between 1-80 percent of their paycheck up to the maximum annual contribution amount. Part-time employees with 35+ hours a week also qualify for a 401K plan.

PSR also offers a 457 retirement plan, which is similar to the 401K Plan, and allows employees to save for retirement using automatic, pre-tax contributions from each paycheck. A main benefit of this plan versus a 401K is that a 457 Plan offers a 457 Catch-Up, where an employee can contribute up to double the normal limits during the 3 years before they retire. However, a 457 Plan can only be rolled over into another 457 Plan, and there is no employer matching offered.

This [quick video](#) may be helpful in furthering your understanding of this benefit. You may also reference the [PSR handbook](#) which is another great resource for more detailed questions.

- **[2021 DCH Employee Handbook](#)**

You may remember your first day at DCH, but may have forgotten some of the basic things you learned about the agency. Well, there's a handbook for that! The DCH Employee Handbook has been updated for 2021 and explains the privileges you currently enjoy as an employee, as well as the duties and responsibilities that we all share.

- **[2021 State Holidays](#)**

Each year, DCH employees enjoy 12 paid holidays. These dates are posted online as easy reference for all state employees.

- **[Employee Purchasing Program \(EPP\)](#)**

Since its establishment in 2015, the Employee Purchasing Program (EPP) has given eligible DCH employees the opportunity to purchase big-ticket items using automatic payroll deductions instead of cash or credit. The Georgia Department of Administrative Services (DOAS), alongside Purchasing Power, backs the program and gives employees an easy way to access deals on electronics, home furniture and appliances, fashion items, fitness equipment, and more, and purchase these items without interest charges, fees, or penalties.

To take advantage, DCH employees only need to qualify under these guidelines:

- You must be 18 years or older with at least 12 months of continuous service,
- You are currently working 30 or more hours a week, and

- You have a salary of at least \$16K a year.

Registration is available at any time through [TeamWorks self-service](#).

- **[Employee Discounts](#)**

In addition to benefits offered by DCH, many private entities offer special discounts for state employees on goods and services related to technology and wireless, amusement attractions, retail brands, and hotels. Newly added offers include T-Mobile and Verizon services, as well as discounts for Budget and Enterprise car rentals.

State of Georgia employees and retirees also have access to additional discounts for local and national restaurants, popular retailers, car dealers, and more. Access [MORE](#), which is powered by the Georgia Technology Authority and Abenity, to find *more* cool deals!

- **[Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program \(PSLF\)](#)**

Qualified DCH employees may be able to have their student loans forgiven through the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program (PSLF). General qualifications for this program include:

- You must be a full-time employee,
- Your loans must be Direct Loans, and
- You must make 120 qualifying payments under an Income-Driven Repayment Plan (IDR plan).

For complete information on all qualifications, check out these [FAQs](#) which detail everything from “qualified employers” to “qualified payments.” You can also easily track payments and qualifications by using the [PSLF tool](#) as well.

- **[Path2College 529 Plan](#)**

Thinking about how you’ll pay for future college tuition for your son or daughter?

A 529 Plan may be a great option for you and your family. Path2College 529 Plan is a state-sponsored college savings plan available to every citizen and taxpayer. The plan allows individuals to save money for chosen beneficiaries’ use for college through contributions free from federal income tax.

Anyone can contribute to the plan, and the money can be used at any accredited university, college, or vocational school nationwide for most college expenses including tuition, technology expenses, fees, books, and other supplies.

If the intended beneficiary does not go to college, the plan holder can name another beneficiary in their family, including aunts/uncles, nieces/nephews, parents, grandparents, immediate in-laws, grandchildren, step-family, and more.

Have additional questions? Check out the [FAQ](#) page on the 529 Plan website.

There is a wealth of information available on the MyDCH intranet for the myriad of questions DCH team members may have regarding resources such as the ones listed above. Visit the

[Employee Resources](#) page or [Team Georgia](#) for additional information regarding employee benefits.



Shandreia Crook
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Popcorn trail mix

Replace added sugar and fat with natural sweetness and filling fiber

Healthy substitutions

Combine these ingredients:¹

6 cups plain air-popped popcorn

½ cup shelled walnut pieces

½ cup shelled sunflower seeds

¾ cup dried strawberries

The benefits

Store-bought trail mix often is high in artificial sugar and saturated fat from ingredients like chocolate. Instead:

In this recipe, dried strawberries provide natural sweetness and may help reduce LDL (bad) cholesterol.²

While pretzels are a popular trail mix ingredient, they often are high in sodium and made from low-fiber refined flour. Popcorn, however, is a whole-grain food high in fiber, which can help reduce blood pressure and inflammation. It also supplies phosphorous for strong bones and zinc for immunity.³

Walnuts provide satisfying and strength-building protein. They also are rich in heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids.⁴

Sunflower seeds add salty crunch to the recipe, along with high amounts of vitamin E and selenium. These nutrients help protect cells against free radical damage, which contributes to many chronic diseases.⁵

Time-saving tip: Separate the mix into 2-cup servings and place in airtight containers. Keep one container prepared for an easy, portion-controlled snack. ¹

Nutritious Eats: Easy Popcorn Trail Mix (accessed October 2020): [nutritouseats.com](https://www.nutritouseats.com).² Healthline: 11 Reasons Why Berries Are Among the Healthiest Foods on Earth (accessed October 2020): [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com).³ Prevention: Which Is Healthier: Popcorn vs. Pretzels (accessed October 2020): [prevention.com](https://www.prevention.com).⁴ Mayo Clinic: Nuts and your heart: Eating nuts for heart health (accessed October 2020): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).⁵ Healthline: Are Sunflower Seeds Good for You? Nutrition, Benefits and More (accessed October 2020): [healthline.com](https://www.healthline.com).

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Thank you for Choosing Kaiser Permanente as your Partner in Health for 2021

Welcome new and returning members! If you are a new member, be sure to visit kp.org/newmember, where you'll find simple steps and tips for getting the most out of your health plan. And beginning this month, start earning up to \$1,000* with the 2021 Wellness Program!

*Each member and covered spouse who each completes the Kaiser Permanente 2021 Wellness Program is eligible to receive a \$500 reward card — up to \$1,000 per household.

<https://healthy.kaiserpermanente.org/georgia/new-members/>

New in 2021

This year, Kaiser Permanente will be sending a few important reminders to members via SMS message. Members can opt-out at any time.



Your Kaiser Permanente 2021 Wellness Program

Reach your health goals by completing our five-step wellness program. Each member and covered spouse who completes the Kaiser Permanente 2021 Wellness Program is eligible to receive a **\$500 reward card**, up to \$1,000 per household.

Our investment in you
EARN UP TO \$1,000
per household



[Get the details](#)

Coronavirus/COVID-19

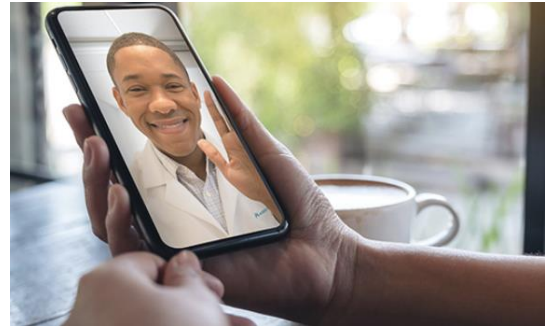
[Learn how to protect yourself and get care](#)

For COVID-19 screenings and personalized care plans for minor health conditions like cold, flu, or sinus problems, [complete an e-visit](#). To talk to an advice nurse 24/7, call 1-855-512-5997.

Don't forget as a Kaiser Permanente member you have access to virtual care at \$0 co-pay. [Schedule an appointment](#).

And, you will not have to pay for costs related to COVID-19 screening or testing.

[Find out more!](#)



Flu shots available

There's a convenient Kaiser Permanente flu shot location near you. And we've taken steps to make your visit safe and convenient — so you can feel good about protecting yourself and your loved ones. Your health and safety remain our top priority. Masks are required for vaccination and we recommend you wear a short sleeve shirt for easy access to your upper arm.

[Get your flu shot near you.](#)

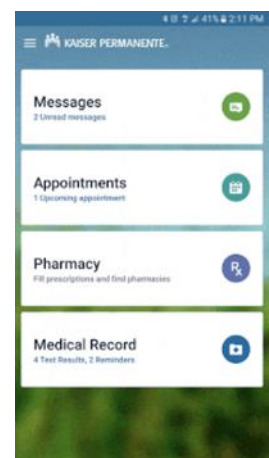


Good health on the go with the Kaiser Permanente mobile app

It's easy to connect to care, get helpful resources, and more with the Kaiser Permanente mobile app. All in one place. Whenever you need it.

Check lab results, schedule appointments, email your doctors and much more.

[Learn more](#)



Strengthening social connections while maintaining physical distance

As the situation around the coronavirus continues to evolve, we're living life differently and learning as we go. Stress levels were high before the pandemic, but now they've skyrocketed. We all need support.

So, while we physically distance ourselves to help stop the spread of COVID-19, finding new ways to stay socially connected is more important than ever.

[Here are some ideas!](#)





It's a new year and it's time for a new you. [Learn how you can stick to your new year's resolution and get help with staying healthy.](#)